

healthy lifestyles ∨



Jose R. Barboza

(MDiv student)

How did you end up at Andrews University as a seminary student?

As a part of the internship program of the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, who is sponsoring my study.

What prompted your decision to live healthier?

Last January [2015] I decided to work on three things: to lose weight—because I knew I was headed for big health problems; to have a better relationship with God; and thirdly, I'm a volunteer/paid PP firefighter and I had a dream of entering the full academy firefighting course to become a certified firefighter. So I started to plan to achieve those three goals.

Where do you currently work as a firefighter?

I serve my community in the Pipestone, Berrien Township, Eau Claire Fire Department.

When did you begin running?

Feb. 4, 2015 was the first day I decided to run—I ran .19 of a mile. That first day was a really sad day because I realized I was completely out of shape and had to do something. I had thought I would be able to run two miles. So I was crying, there, in the middle of the Eau Claire High School running track. I had a good conversation with God. I said, "I know that I can't, but I know that you can."

May I ask how old you are, how much you weighed at your heaviest, and your current weight?

I'm 29. I weighed 364 pounds in January of 2015 and currently weigh about 235.

That's an amazing weight loss! Did you have a support network?

Yes, my wife Lorraine Justiniano, who is a nutritionist; Harold Altamirano, a pastor friend, and his wife Belkis; my father, my brothers, an online running group (see below) and others.

What goals did you initially set?

After my "failure" at running, I decided to walk at least three miles every day, because initially I couldn't run. I divided the miles like this: the first mile I'd tell God about my problems; the second mile I'd tell him about my dreams; and the third mile I'd listen to God.

The first two months were crazy, painful. Every day, up at 5 a.m., exercise, hustle to school and then work. But the third month was a little bit easier. At that point I decided to run one mile a day, then walk two or three miles. Then my friend Harold sent me a request to join a Facebook group called "Run 1,000 mile challenge." So I accepted with the goal of running 1,000 miles in 2015.

That goal sounds really challenging. How did you do?

With this group, you post every day how many miles you have run. When I joined, I was able to post about 75 miles I had run since February 4. I had logged all my previous exercise on my phone.

Six months later I was running four miles a day, and walking two miles. My main goal wasn't to lose weight. I weighed myself the first day, and then I didn't look at the scale again for a long time. I could just see that I was losing weight by my clothes not fitting. In August I weighed myself again and I was around 300 pounds. Sixty-four pounds less.

That month I decided to do an extreme effort, eight miles a day, in order to reach the 1,000 miles, which I reached on November 1. From Feb. 4, 2015 up to today (March 8, 2016), I have run 1,886 miles.



Did you participate in any races during the year?

I ran the Thanksgiving 10K in Niles [Michigan], and then spontaneously decided to run the 5K that started about 20 minutes after I finished the 10K. On March 20, 2016, I will be running my first half-marathon (13.1 miles) in the 2016 Publix Georgia Marathon & Half Marathon in Atlanta, Georgia. My goal is to do my first marathon in November 2016.

You said when you started exercising it wasn't very pleasant. Do you enjoy running now?

Yes! I need to run every day. If I don't, I feel like something is wrong. I run Saturdays also. It's not just running; it's my time with God.

What advice would you have for people who would like to get in better shape this year?

I have three phrases that I live by in this regard: (1) "I can't but God can" (2) "Progress, even if it's slow, is still progress" (3) "Get out the door"

What positive results have you noticed from your improved health?

For one thing, I don't get sleepy during the day any more. I have much more energy. I can sleep much better and I'm more involved in outdoor physical activities.

Did you incorporate any other lifestyle changes in the past year?

I have included more salad, starchy vegetables such as yucca (which is a non-processed form of complex carbohydrates), lean cuts, and more water. Also, I have decreased my eating-out, not that I never eat-out but it's less often than before.

What does your wife think about your change over the last year?

She's happy, obviously, not just for how I look, but also for my improved health. And she's a health professional, so I owe her a big thank you. And thank you to Harold for motivating me with the running challenge, and to the 1,000-mile running group for all their encouragement.

What's your ultimate weight goal, taking into consideration that this process takes a long time?

Yes! It is a long process. My goal is to reach 190 pounds.